



## THE DOOR OF THE UNREAL- Gerald Biss

CHAPTER X. THE next morning I went up to town by the 9:45 from Crawley; and Burgess drove me to the station, very loath to let

I could see, however, that he was both piqued and pussied that I had not spoken more openly to him as to what was working in my mind; but the whole idea was so bisarre and at such an embryonic stage. that I frankly did not feel myself justified in unburdening myself at the expense of burdening him with what could only be throughout my absence an ever-present horror in his mind, as ghastly in its uncertainty almost as in its actuality, if

Moreover, it was something entirely outside the scope of his men-tal disthesis, and would seem to him an utterly wild absurdity in the absence of any proof. Therefore I had decided, after turning the matter over in my mind from the matter over in my mind from every point of view, that Fitzroy Manders was the only man to whom I could talk openly—the only man whose help I could enlist in the first instance at such an early stage of the ultimate possibilities. In the train I skimmed through all the morning papers, which were still full of the sensation, padding out the lack of anything tresh with a whole carnival of rumor, which

a whole carnival of rumor, which may have served to appease the hungry public, but certainly took the matter no further from a prac-tical point of view.

Among them were one or two hot and windy attacks upon Scotland Yard and its ineptitude which secretly rather pleased me, as they promised to make the difficult task I saw ahead of me easier at the psychological moment, when I should find myself forced to call in official help in what was likely to be a very unofficial and certainly unconventional manner.

was the vacation.

him, as I had suddenly realized that it was the vacation.

And time was an urgent factor. However, I was in luck, as his clerk told me that he had just arrived, being detained in town correcting the proofs of his new book on "Criminal Law," which he had not had time to finish while the courts were sitting.

He ordered me to be shown in at once and welcomed me warmly.

"Osgood, by Jove, this is a pleasant surprise," was his greeting, as he shook hands cordially. "Wherever have you sprung from in your wandering to and fro up and down the earth."

"Clymping Manor," I replied; and he started with surprise.

"By Jove," he exclaimed again, "of all the peculiar coincidences! How did that happen?"

I told him of my old friendship with Burgess, and the tie that always drew me there first upon arriving in England.

"And a strange state of affairs you found there," he commented. "Of course Clymping mentioned my name in connection with the Bullingdon affair; and that is what recalled my existence so premptly to your mind?"

"Not exactly that," I answered.

your mind?"

"Not exactly that," I answered, taking the armchair by the fire, to which he pointed. "I was intending anybow to renew our very pleas, ant acquaintanceship at an early date, but it is on account of this strange mystery that I have run up to consult you to-day, much to the diagruntlement of poor old Burgass, and I hope to enlist your help."

"Anything I can do, of course," he said warmly. "But how? Have

He passed the box, and I took one and lit it without haste, pendering the best line of approach, while he seated himself upon the leather fender, puffing at his pipe.

"We are up against a very tough proposition, Manders," I began, and he nodded acquiescence—"up

proposition, Manders," I began, and he nodded acquiescence—"up against the toughest thing you ever dreamed of in all the annals of crime; and I honeatly believe that you are the only man in England—certainly the only man I can lay hands on—who can help me."

Manders shrugged his shoulders slightly in deprecation.

"They are at the end of their tether at 'the Yard, anyhow," he sald, "and at their wits' end how to carry the matter an inch further.

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and he admitted in confidence, which he won't mind my divulging to you, that it is a proper brick wall of a problem."

"Did he mention the German professor to you?" I asked.

"Yes, and he interested me very much as a type. What has he got to do with it?"

I liked his directness as a qu

"Possibly everything." I replied, "if my instinct be not playing a trick on me. I have a theory. strange and bizarre beyond all words in this humdrum twentieth century, one which touches a sub-ject we discussed at considerable length one night in Rumania; and he is the keystone, the pivot of the whole thing, which only came home to me as the result of my years of travel in the remote parts of the Near Bast.

"It is fantastic to a degree and may prove futile; and it is certainly not the sort of thing I would care to spring unsubstantiated upon cold-blooded officialdom for fear of cold-blooded officialdom for the being locked up in one of your po-lite lunatic asylums for the rest of

"But I must have help—immediate help; and that is where you come in, if you will give up a month, or possibly less, of your valuable time. Time is of the utmost urgency to forestall the possibilities of the company o sibility of even worse happenings."
"It's the vacation fortunately,"
he said, "and apart from the last he said, "and apart from the last few pages of those proofs"—waving his hand in the direction of the big table in the window overlooking the gardens—"I have nothing to do but golf according to programme. So come along and unburden yourself fally to me. I certainly shall not think you mad," he concluded, with a little laugh.

And then and there, walking up and down the room as I often do when thinking hard and talking at when thinking hard and talking at the same time. I laid my whole weird theory before him, recapitulating the story of the Brighton Road affairs and picking up my points as I went along, laying special stress upon the reasons which had connected Professor Wolff with them in my mind and keeping nothing back.

Manders proved a splendid listener as he absorbed his brief, so to speak, and I was delighted at the fact that, beyond starting once and raising his eyebrows, he did not turn a hair as I unravelled my fantastic theory. I covered a good

fantastic theory. I covered a good deal of ground, recalling much of our talk in Rumanis and spoke for nearly an hour in my anxiety to prove the possibility, if not the probability, of the suggestion I was propounding.

When I stopped and threw my-self back in the armohair a trifle exhausted, he gave one long low

and then he put me through as searching and strengous cross-amination as ever it has been my let or most other people's to take.

"Now what do you want me to do?" he asked, when he flad concluded. "I do not call you mad, and to my mind you have made out a terribly strong case; and I'm with you to see it through to the end, however ghastly it may prove. As you say, above all things we must try and forestall worse happenings, if what you surmise be true. No, obviously there is not a moment to be lost."

"I must stay on the spot and

moment to be lost."

"I must stay on the apot and watch any possible developmenta." I said. "I am convinced that it is my plain and obvious duty, pending the elaboration of a sufficiently strong case to take action upon. Preventive action I shall take myself at all hasards, if all else fail;

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if the authorities object subse-

"The situation is so tense at the resent juncture that I dare not go way myself and get out of touch, or risk anything delaying my return at the critical moment, so I must fall back on someone else-you, if incerely trust—to go abroad im-nediately and make inquiries into the past and the habits of this Professor Lycurgus Wolff, of Berlin and Vienna. With your cosmo-politan habit, your knowledge and our brains, you are the ideal man for my purpose, especially as your inquiries may lead you further field into the Near Bast, of which you, like so few people, have a more than superficial knowledge.

"I hardly like to mention the sub-ject," I added, "but money, either by way of fee or expenses, is no object. I fortunately haven't to worry about that side of things in life, and will draw anything you may want this afternoon." Manders laughed, and it relieved

the situation. "That's all right, old chap," he struck in. "The cost of a week or two's travel fortunately doesn't matter much to me either, especially as my wife, apart from myself. and my earnings, is pretty well off; but I appreciate the thoughtful sug-gestion. A fee I would not hear of, thank you all the same; but I am your man and there's my hand on

"Thank God," I exclaimed, taking his outstretched hand and wringing

these beastly proofs through and ready for the crinter, and then I'll get back home, collect a few things and appease my wife. She's all right," he interjected, with a laugh, "a real good sort who will understand without being told too much, when she gets a hint that it is of

vital importance." "Then, if she does not raise any objection, we might have an early dinner together at the Travellers' and a final talk," I suggested. "Meanwhile, I will see about tickets, money, etc., for your journey, and we can have a square up later on. You will at least give me the satisfaction of standing in upon expenses, as I can't go myself?"

Manders made a little gesture. "As you insist theu—halves," he agreed; "and I'll leave all that to you, as time presses: My man will take my luggage to the train and see about my seat. And now to work! Don't think me inhospitwork! Don't think me inhospit-able in not asking you to lunch, but

able in not asking you to lunch, but time won't admit. Mine will be some sandwiches at my writing-table—not for the first time."

"Of course, I understand," I answered, rising. "I'll leave you at once. We will meet at the Travellers' at a quarter to seven. I am most deeply grateful to you, Manders; you have taken an enormous watch?"

weight off my mind."
"Rot, old chap," was his answer in characteristic English fashion.

## **NO MORE GRAY HAIR**

his outstretched hand and wringing it with more feeling than I am usually in the habit of showing—"and thank you! You have taken a great weight off my mind."

"What I can do, I will do, and you may rest assured that I will not spare myself," said Manders, solemnly; "and I am with you to the ad of this ghastly business. We will see it through together."

There was a moment of silent reaction, both of us thinking deeply.

"There must be no delay," I said. "It is now the tenth of April, and the thirtieth-is Walpurgis Nacht."

Manders gave a little start.

"Yes, I know. I'll start this very evening by the boat train. Two of street, Rept 931-A Chicago, Ill.

keen as you are to get this whole more hell's play takes place."

No words will ever express my relief as I made my way up through the Temple into Fleet street and halled a taxi to take me first to my bank and then to Cook's in Ludgate Circus; and I did not realize that it was two o'clock before I had got all arrangements made, and I was thoroughly hungry.

I drove to the Travellers' and lunched heartily, with a temporary sensation of relief as the result of my morning's success; and then, during the afternoon, I diligently



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pursued inquiries as to what was known of Professor Wolff through (Continued on Page 13.)

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